

## Sisters finalists in contest with radon awareness campaign

Radon » Warning posters are a class project and part of an awareness campaign.

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**Holladay »** Emily and Anna Pinnock are wise beyond their years when it comes to deadly radon.

Emily, an eighth-grader at Olympus Junior High, and sister Anna, a sixth-grader at Cottonwood Elementary, put their art and smarts together to develop winning first- and second-place entries for the 2010 Utah Radon Poster Contest. The statewide competition is intended to help young Utahns learn about the dangers of the odorless and invisible gas.

Joshua Basilio of Spring Creek Elementary in Provo won third place.

"Radon is a really big deal," said Anna Pinnock, pointing to the Environmental Protection Agency's estimate that about 20,000 Americans die each year because of it. "That's a lot of people if you think about it."

Utah's three winners were selected from 61 entries. Last week, Emily Pinnock learned that her poster placed second in national competition, which means she, her teacher and a parent will enjoy an expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C. in January, National Radon Month.

Emily is in Joanne Brown's integrated science class at Olympus Junior this year. Three years ago, her older sister Rachel competed in and won the national competition under Brown's guidance.

Brown said teaching about radon, a natural radioactive element in the same chemical family as helium, has been part of her curriculum on the periodic table of elements. The more she and her students learned about it, the more they realized the need for public education.

"It's not one of those things where people are experimenting in a lab," she said, "but it's right here all around us, and we never knew."

In Utah, a state where about one in every five homes has background levels of radon considered dangerously high, the young artists help educate the public, said John Hultquist, leader of the radon program for the state Division of Radiation Control.

"The poster contest is a great way to educate people about the dangers of radon gas, the second leading cause of lung cancer," Hultquist said. "Testing for radon in homes and schools is the only way to find out if a radon problem exists."

Both Pinnocks used colored pencils for their winning posters.

Emily, who enjoys cooking and sewing in addition to drawing and painting, said she it took her one, hourlong session to craft her design for "Which one? Radon."

Below her rendering of a trio of charming, bright-colored homes, it notes; "You'll never know which one ... until you test your home."

"I tried to make it bright so it would stand out," Emily said.

Anna, who likes soccer, piano and math, depicts in her poster a road snaking to a dead end. Its message: "Radon ... a road you don't want to take ... it's odorless, tasteless, invisible and deadly."

"It's a fun contest," said Anna.

The Pinnocks used a home test to check their own radon levels.

"We have a little amount," said Emily, "but it's no big deal."

Knowing that is peace of mind, said Anna.

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#### Radon testing

You can test for radon yourself with kits that are available online or bought from hardware stores and other retailers. The test kits, which typically cost around \$25, should be marked with "Meets EPA Requirements."

Through the state, a kit is available for \$6, including lab fees. For help finding a test kit or hiring an EPA-qualified tester, go to: [www.radon.utah.gov](http://www.radon.utah.gov) or call the Division of Radiation Control at 801-536-0091 or 1-800-458-0145.

Also, the state's Web page offers a feature that allows you to see radon test results by ZIP code.